

SORCERER HAS THE MAGIC TOUCH



Included in the *Sorcerer* package you will find an issue of Popular Enchanting Magazine, the Creatures of Frobozz Infotater, and a handy storage pouch.

Hello Sailor!

Welcome to the Infocom Elite Adventurers Society. Some of you may remember *The New York Times* put out by "Mike" of the Zork Users Group. Well, Mike is now Infocom's Product Manager and *The New York Times* and some of the Zork Users Group's other services have been taken over by Infocom.

What can those of you who have never seen *The New York Times* expect? The latest breakthroughs! The newest Infocom games to watch for! Special offers! Feature articles: the making of an Infocom game; unusual commands that get outlandish results; the people behind the scenes, what they're doing there, and

why we only let them out on Sundays and Thursday afternoons! And more! The whole spectacular, sordid, spine-tingling story is right here in *The New York Times*.

While the staff of *The New York Times* never runs out of subjects to write about, now and then we do like to reach into the NZT mailbag for a few ideas from our readers. If you have any suggestions for articles or regular features you would like to see, or if you just want to practice your penmanship, drop a line to: New York Times, Inevitable Newsletter Articles of the '80's, 55 Wheeler St., Cambridge, Mass., 02138. 

InfoNews Roundup

New Game!

Sorcerer, the second in the Enchanter series of adventures in the mystic arts, is now available. The game was written by Steve Meretzky, whose hilarious science fiction game, *Planetfall*, was named by *InfoWorld* as the Best Adventure Game of 1983. In *Sorcerer*, you are a member of the prestigious Circle of Enchanters, a position that you achieved in recognition of your success in defeating the Warlock Krill in *Enchanter*.

When the game starts, you realize that Belboz, the Eldest of the Circle, and the most powerful Enchanter in the land, has disappeared. Perhaps he has just taken a vacation, but it wouldn't be like him to leave without letting you know. You remember that he has been experimenting with powerful spells and dangerous demons, and you fear the worst — that Belboz has been trapped by an evil force, and that his magic might be turned against the Circle. And only a powerful Sorcerer can rescue him from a terrible fate!

With its reliance on magic spells and potions, *Sorcerer* has become an immediate hit both inside Infocom and with our crew of outside game testers, many of whom think it's our best yet. Besides its outstanding writing and its intricately crafted plot and problems, it boasts the largest vocabulary of any Infocom game: over 1000 words! With your *Encyclopedia Frobozzica*, you'll have a lot of fun researching the Enchanter universe and the History of the Great Underground Empire. The Enchanter series will be concluded in 1985. Look for details in future issues of *The New York Times*.

Technical Hot-Line

Infocom has established a direct line to our technical support staff. Call (617) 576-3190 for answers to questions of a technical nature (e.g., disk problems, game bugs, etc.). Please note that this is not a hint line.

Hint Booklets

In December, Infocom's long-awaited direct mail operation got underway. Many of the functions formerly provided by the Zork Users Group were taken over by Infocom. Maps and InvisiClues hint booklets were produced for all 10 of Infocom's products. The games themselves were also made available primarily as a service to those of you in remote geographical areas and to those who own the less common computer systems.

Orders are processed by the Creative Fulfillment division of the DM Group, one of the most respected firms in direct mail. Their facilities are in the New York metropolitan area, which explains the strange addresses and phone numbers you'll see on the order forms.

There were admittedly some annoying start-up problems, but the operation is now running smoothly. We hope that those of you who experienced problems with your first order will give us another chance.

Zork Fan in Orbit

When she's in the air, Sally Ride, the nation's first woman to go into space, is occupied with the computers on the space shuttle Challenger. But when she gets her feet back on the ground, she turns to Infocom for entertainment. Sally's favorite computer pastime is none other than *Zork*. "*Zork* is going to drive me to my knees," Sally said in a recent magazine interview.

Zork in Print

Steve Meretzky, author of *Planetfall* and *Sorcerer*, has written three "What Do I Do Now?" books for the Tor Young Adult Adventure series. They are titled *ZORK: The Forces of Krill*, *ZORK: The Malifestro Quest*, and *ZORK: The Cavern of Doom*. Look for them at your local book store.

. . . More InfoNews on Page 2

Call the Exterminator

Despite our best honing efforts, some pretty funny bugs have made it out into the marketplace. Here's a run-down of some of the most embarrassing and hilarious bugs on record. Note of caution: If you haven't finished a particular game, we'd advise against reading the associated paragraph.

ZORK I

There is an obscure container bug that is probably in every single version of the game. A while back, we were wondering what would happen if you have two large containers, and you tried putting them inside each other. So, we went into *Zork I*, put the coffin inside the raft, and then said PUT RAFT IN COFFIN. They both disappeared!

Zork I, being our oldest game, contains some classic InfoBugs in its early version. Shaking any non-empty open container may cause a crash. You "bump your head on the river" if you try to enter it. And saying GO <SOMETHING>, such as GO ROPE, may send you into a totally bizarre location.

ZORK II

One of the funniest bugs ever discovered was that you could "talk" to various objects in *Zork II*, such as the aquarium. A command like AQUARIUM, WEST would elicit the response, "The aquarium leaves the room." One player led the aquarium halfway across the dungeon in search of the solution to a problem.

ZORK III

Possibly the most embarrassing bug ever released occurs at the very end of the earliest version of this game. If you are carrying the sword in Prison Cell number four when the Dungeon Master pushes the button on the Parapet, the game crashes. This happens because the sword's routine checks adjoining rooms to know whether to glow, and the relocated Prison Cell had two different NORTH exits. The reason none of the testers ever found this bug was because they all used the sword to block the beam of light, and therefore never brought it as far as the Prison Cell!

A really fun bug occurs when you enter the dungeon, drop one of the seven items necessary for admission,

and then knock on the dungeon door FROM THE INSIDE! The Dungeon Master will tell you you're not ready and send you back to the Button Room, but also follow you! You can then lead him all over the game, and even strand him in the *Zork I* area, if you're clever.

In an early version of the game, you could carry a light source across the lake inside the chest, thus avoiding using the viewing table to get the grue repellent, and consequently finishing the game with only 6 of the 7 points. Since this bug was fixed, we've had people call up, saying "but my friend says the way to get to the Key Room is to bring a light source across the lake inside the chest!"

STARCROSS

Speaking of talking to inanimate objects, this bug is rampant in early versions of *Starcross*. A simple (though totally unintended) solution to the red rod problem is to say NEST, DROP ROD. The game replies "Dropped." Ouch. Along the same lines, one player was trying to turn the beam of energy off in the Laboratory, and said BEAM, OUT. The game's response: "The beam leaves the room."

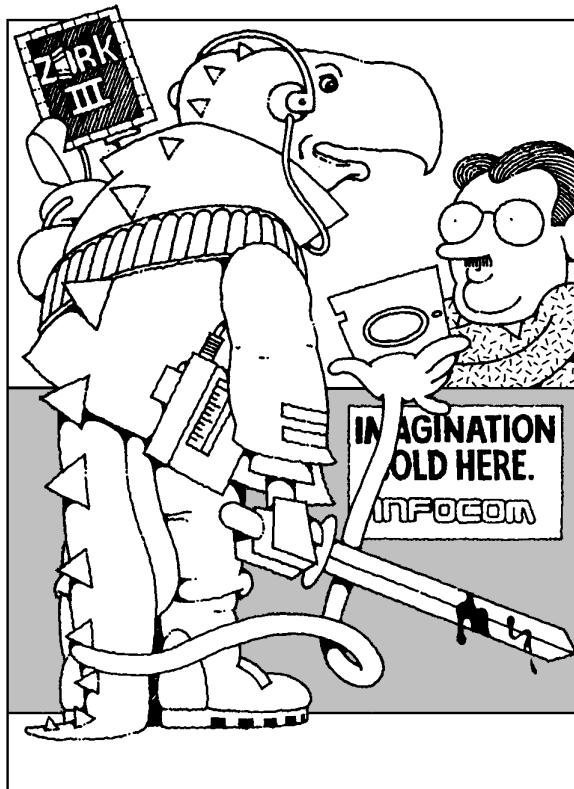
Try this one: go to the top of the tree and say THROW HANDS. If you have an early version, *Starcross* replies "The pair of hands sails away, drifting in a long arc towards the ground."

DEADLINE

Well, there's the first floor bathroom door that was difficult to open. If you said OPEN DOOR, you were asked "Which door do you mean, the door or the south closet door."

A bug that (thankfully) only a few people have managed to duplicate is the strange case of the two Dunbars — the corpse lying upstairs in the bedroom, and the live Dunbar wandering around as though nothing strange has happened!

Finally, here's a personal favorite. Sit down on a piece of furniture, such as the couch or a bed. Then say (something like) BAXTER, TELL ME ABOUT MARSHALL ROBNER. *Deadline* replies "You can't see any me here." This one was recently voted Bug of the Year by the New England Playtesters Association (NEPA).



...More InfoNews

New Systems

Infocom is committed to producing versions of its software for all popular microcomputers. We are proud to announce three new systems with which Infocom software is compatible: the Kaypro II (with CP/M), MS-DOS 2.0 (with IBM compatible disk, 80 characters x 25 line screen or 40 characters x 25 line screen), and TI-99/4A (32K memory expansion, disk drive, and one of the following modules: Extended Basic, Mini-Memory, or Editor/Assembler).

Fortunately, Infocom's IBM versions were written in such a way that they run unmodified on the new PCjr.

Infocom certainly has the widest range of compatibilities of any software producer. The 17 systems are now: Apple II, Atari, Commodore 64, CP/M, DEC Rainbow or DECmate, IBM PC or PCjr, Kaypro II, MS-DOS 2.0, NEC APC, NEC

PC-8000, Osborne, PDP-11, TI-99/4A, TI Professional, TRS-80 Model I, TRS-80 Model III, and Tandy 2000.

Watch *The New Zork Times* for news of new system compatibilities. Be sure to tell your friends who have been waiting to experience Infocom's interactive fiction on their (previously incompatible) systems.

Info Brochure

Enclosed with this issue of *The New Zork Times* is a copy of Infocom's new product brochure, "Our Circuits, Ourselves!" We would love to hear any comments you may have about it. Address them to Mr. Delwood Bland, Infocom, 55 Wheeler St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

Rumor

We have heard a rumor that someone is planning a parody of *Zork* titled *Dork: The Mediocre Empire*. **Z**

YOU CAN DO IT

Stretch your imagination a bit and try to find some spectacular bugs of your own. The finest bugs begin in the human mind! Here's an example — what would happen if you said AGAIN on the first move of the game? **Z**

So There!

Zork is a registered trademark of Infocom, Inc. *Deadline*, *Starcross*, *Suspended*, *Witness*, *Planetfall*, *Enchanter*, *Infidel*, *Sorcerer*, *Interlogic*, and *InvisiClues* are trademarks of Infocom, Inc. **Z**

A Zork By Any Other Name

Have you arrested the murderer in our mystery thriller "Was It Murder?" Or found the alien artifact in "Celestus"? Or maybe met a somewhat childish robot in "Lost Planet"? No, those aren't the names of our newest games — in fact, they're rejected names for some existing ones (can you guess which?). As a player, you've probably taken the names of our games for granted. We didn't. And if you think that writing the games is tough, you should have been there when we named them.

To be honest, some names were easier than others. *Zork*, for example, was simple, since it was used by some of the founders of Infocom back in 1977, when the game was first written. At that time the only other "adventure" game was the original *Adventure*, and authors Marc Blank and Tim Anderson were at a complete loss in thinking up a good name for their new game. Since they wanted people to play it, and since you can't run a nameless program, they needed something quick. Blank chose *Zork*, a nonsense word commonly used at the MIT Lab for Computer Science as an all-purpose interjection. He figured that he would think of something else later, but the name stuck (he never did come up with anything better, anyway) and survives to this day.

As an aside, the original *Zork* had well over 200 rooms, a vocabulary of nearly 1000 words, and required a mainframe computer with over a megabyte of memory! Infocom's *Zork* trilogy has about twice the material of the original mainframe *Zork* in about one quarter of a megabyte. That's progress.

When Marc Blank started writing Infocom's first mystery, he tentatively called it "Was It Murder?" After all, it looked like a suicide. The name was distinctly bland, but nobody around Infocom could think of anything better (give us a break, we had only three employees). We gave the problem to our ad agency, Giardini/Russell (G/R), who came up with the name *Deadline* along with its distinctive logo.

Dave Lebling gave his science fiction scenario a working title of "A Gift From Space". Nobody's socks were knocked off, so we gave G/R

another shot. They proposed five possible titles: *Celestus*, *The Linking*, *Alien Intercept*, *Stardate: 2186*, and *Starcross*. *Celestus* didn't have the right down-at-the-heels image for your ship's name. The *Linking* sounded too much like a Stephen King novel. *Alien Intercept* begged for a joystick. And *Stardate: 2186* wasn't even good enough for a *Star Trek* episode. *Starcross*, however, with its reference to the stars and its similarity to the word *starcrossed*, had the right sort of feel, and was elected.

We did a little better internally with some of our recent games. Mike Berlyn's *Suspended* was originally called *Suspension* (*Suspenders*, affectionately) for the main character's state of suspended animation, but *Suspended* seemed to work a little better. Stu Galley's 1930's-style mystery, in which the player is actually present at the time of a murder, led us to immediately think

of the title *Witness*. G/R suggested changing this slightly to *The Witness*, a title more in keeping with titles in the Raymond Chandler era. *Enchanter*, written by Blank and Lebling, had its name before it was even started. It just sounded right and its only serious competition was *Zork IV*. A strenuous argument raged for weeks: was it a *Zork* or wasn't it. It wasn't.

Planetfall was titled *Sole Survivor* by its author, Steve Meretzky, and later shortened to just *Survivor*. When we discovered another game called *Survivor*, we decided we'd rather switch than fight. G/R went to it again and submitted a list about 30 long, their favorite of which was *Lost Planet*. Reaction was less than enthusiastic, not the least because it reminded two of us of the TV series, *Lost in Space*. Blank suggested *Planetfall* during a long, frustrating meeting — he thought he had seen it once in an SF book as a word

meaning arrival on a new planet (much like landfall). Nobody really believed him, but it was never improved upon.

Our first *Tale of Adventure* might have been called *Pyramid*. Though uninspired, it was used through the game's initial testing and had a loyal following due to its descriptive nature. G/R was unimpressed and suggested *Infidel*. Infocom was unimpressed: it sounded more like something from the Crusades than an exploration for a lost pyramid. But in combination with its distinctive logo and the proposed package design, we relented. We even changed the game a bit to make it work better.

That takes us to the present. As this newsletter appears, we will be releasing the sequent to *Enchanter*, *Spellbreaker*. No that's not right — I think it's *Spellbound*. Or was it *Sorcerer*? I don't know, really. And I don't care. I'm just glad I'm not working on ad copy. **Z**

CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE: Twenty valuable treasures. Someone just left them in the trophy case in my living room. How about that?! Write to Ellron, White House in the Clearing, Forest of Zork 9060.

FOR SALE: Three-headed dog, cheap. Used to be fierce guard dog, now just slobbers over everyone. Very friendly, upkeep low — one dragon carcass a day should satisfy it. Contact Boris Flathead, Keeper of the Tomb.

FOR SALE: Single-person mining ship, perfect for asteroid belt. Equipped with personable navigation computer. A beauty; hate to part with it but am leaving quantum black hole biz to go on lecture circuit. Write Box 3, Ceres Station.

WANTED: Gardener for large estate. Last one quit in huff. Grounds include rose garden and orchard. Generous salary. Send references to Leslie Robner, 506 Lakeview Road, Maitland, CT.

WANTED: Authentic working *Enchanter's* wand. Last one stolen by upstart adventurer. Will pay top dollar. Contact Wizard of Frobozz, in Exile, Remote Corner of the Great Underground Empire 9133.

WANTED: More reliable manufacturer of integrated circuits. Current brand failed at inopportune moment. Please send brochure to: Ignatz Feroukin, Planetary Management Bureau, Contra, Sector 19G.

IT IS WHAT IT EATS.

"Caviar in, caviar out." This adage fits just one brand of computer game software.

Because nothing else stimulates your imagination and challenges your computer's capabilities like Infocom prose games. Our secret? We put you inside our stories. And once within, you'll find a dimension alive with situations, personalities, and logical puzzles that can't be experienced anywhere outside our stories.

Step up to Infocom. All words. No pictures. The secret reaches of your mind are beckoning. The next dimension is in there waiting for you.

(For more information on Infocom games contact: Infocom, Inc., P.O. Box 855, Garden City, NY 11530.)

INFOCOM™
The next dimension.



For your Apple II, Atari, Commodore 64, CP/M 8", Dec Rainbow, DEC RT-11, IBM, MS-DOS 2.0, NEC APC, NEC PC-8000, Osborne, TI Professional, TI 99/4A, TRS-80 Model I, TRS-80 Model III.

INSIDE LOOK AT GAME DEVELOPMENT

Here at Infocom, we try to get as many people as possible involved in the game development process in order to create a smorgasbord of ideas. Our theory is that "too few cooks create a noisome stew." In fact, we frequently even invite characters from the games to our development sessions. Here's a transcript made from a recording of one such session:

MARC BLANK: We need to start working on a new game.

DIMWIT FLATHEAD: It must have two hundred thousand rooms, four million takeable objects, and understand a vocabulary of every single word ever spoken in every language ever invented.

WIZARD OF FROBOZZ: Fantastic.

MONICA: Not on your life, flat-brain. Not with the crew of two-bit programmers we've got around this dump!

BLANK: I think we ought to analyze the situation.

SGT. DUFFY: With all due respect, sir, I don't think I can take the situa-

tion to the lab.

FROBOZZ: Fiddlesticks.

FLOYD: Enough talking! Let's play hide-and-seeker!

FLATHEAD: And it must be 600 thousand million billion megabytes and take up 37 truckloads of floppy disks...

BLANK: Maybe if we could start by settling on a genre.

GURTHARK-TUN-BESNAP: I don't know the word "genre."

BLANK: That is, fantasy, sci-fi, mystery...

MONICA: The only mystery around here is how you ever got to be VP, gnu.

FLATHEAD: ...and the packages will be made of solid gold and platinum...

KRILL: I can't use multiple direct objects with the verb "made."

BLANK: Maybe we should schedule another meeting...

FROBOZZ: Friday. Z

INFOCOM CALLED "BEST THING SINCE SLICED BREAD"

Another batch of awards — Stu Galley, author of *The Witness*, was in the Big Apple recently to accept an award for his popular murder mystery challenge; *Electronic Games* named *The Witness* the Best Adventure of 1984. It was the second straight year Infocom has captured the honor — *Deadline* took the prize in 1983. Three more special honors were recently announced: *Planetfall* was named Best Adventure Game of 1983 by *Infoworld* magazine; *Suspended* was selected as the Best Computer Game by *Rolling Stone* magazine; and *Infidel* was picked Best Adventure/Strategy Game by *The Video Game Update*. Readers of *PC World* chose the *Zork* trilogy as best in the magazine's "World Class PC Contest." The Parent's Choice Foundation recently gave *Zork I* its Parent's Choice Award. Readers of *Electronic Fun* magazine voted the *Zork* trilogy a winner in the first "Hall of Fun" contest.

Infocom has received a lot of favorable publicity lately. Marc Blank, vice president for product development, appeared on a CBS Morning

News segment featuring *The Witness*. *The New York Times* (not to be confused with *The New Zork Times*) *Sunday Book Review* devoted a page to Infocom's interactive fiction — *Deadline* in particular — saying "*Deadline*, in fact, is more like a genre of fiction than a game." The December 5 issue of *Time* magazine featured a full page on Infocom titled "Putting Fiction on a Floppy," the December 22 *Washington Post* devoted 3 pages to the Infocom story, as did the March 1984 issue of *Discover* magazine.

The December issue of *Creative Computing*, which reviewed *Planetfall* and *The Witness* in an article entitled "Infocom Does it Again ... And Again," had this to say: "With each new release, each new venture into a genre they have made famous, the people at Infocom, authors of *Zork* and *Deadline*, seem to reaffirm a commitment to a level of quality and innovation that has guaranteed them not only a fiercely loyal following, but also an undisputed position at the forefront of the computer adventure market." Z

(CUT ON DOTTED LINE)

(CUT ON DOTTED LINE)

Free InvisiClues

with this coupon and the purchase of any Infocom game. Return this coupon with your game order or with proof of purchase of an Infocom game (sales receipt dated between March 1, 1984 and May 15, 1984 identifying the game purchased and the warranty/registration card from the game purchased) and get one of the following sets of InvisiClues hint books and maps (\$7.95 value) absolutely free:

Check One:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ <i>Zork I</i> | ☐ <i>Witness</i> |
| ☐ <i>Zork II</i> | ☐ <i>Starcross</i> |
| ☐ <i>Zork III</i> | ☐ <i>Suspended*</i> |
| ☐ <i>Enchanter</i> | ☐ <i>Planetfall</i> |
| ☐ <i>Deadline</i> | ☐ <i>Infidel</i> |

*Map included in game package

Limit: one per customer.

Response must be postmarked no later than May 15, 1984. Return coupon to Infocom, Coupon Offer, C.S. 855, Garden City, NY 11530.

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New Zork Times Puzzle

$$\left(\frac{A}{B}\right)^C + \frac{(D+E)}{(F)(G)} = X$$

A = The number of grasping extensions of all seven robots in *Suspended* (including Fred) put together.

B = The seat number in Row R that Ms. Dunbar sat in when she attended the Hartford Philharmonic Orchestra on the evening of July 7, 1982, according to *Deadline*.

C = The value of the Flathead stamp found in *Zork II*, in zorkmids.

D = The first year that the Royal Museum in *Zork III* lay unguarded.

E = The number of matches in the matchbook in *Zork I*, at the beginning of the game.

F = The cost of building Flood Control Dam #3, in millions of zorkmids.

G = The number of entries in the *Starcross* tape library.

X = _____.

CONTEST RULES

1. All entries must be submitted on this form. No copies accepted.
2. All entries must be received by May 1, 1984.
3. Up to ten prizes will be awarded for correct answers. In the event that more than ten correct answers are received, a drawing will be held to determine the winners. Void where prohibited by law.

PRIZE: A copy of *Sorcerer*.

Please enclose your name, address, telephone number, and the system you'd want *Sorcerer* to run on. Return to Infocom, NZT Puzzle, 55 Wheeler St., Cambridge, MA 02138.